

**ABSTRACT**

A method and a system for using a biometric characteristic of an authorized user, such as the user's voice, to grant access to, or activate, functions of the personal information appliance. In one embodiment, a computer implemented method for  
5 providing access to functions of a portable information appliance include, while the appliance is operating in a configuration mode, converting input signals from a microphone to a first data set representing a voice of an authorized user and storing the first data set in the portable information appliance. While the portable information  
10 appliance is operating in a standby mode, the method further includes converting input signals from the microphone to a second data set representing sound detected at the microphone. Providing access to functions of the portable information appliance then occurs when the first data set matches the second data set.